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# PRESS Release

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**For Immediate Release**

**Topic:** Southernmost County Health Departments Get Flu Vaccine

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Health department clinics in 30 southernmost Mississippi counties on Monday will begin giving 20,000 doses of influenza vaccine to people at high risk of flu complications.

The Health Department's first shipments of vaccine are being routed to the southern part of the state because early-season influenza has appeared there first in recent years.

Mississippi State Department of Health officials anticipate delivery of all 130,000 doses ordered by the end of November and will distribute statewide to county health departments as the additional vaccine is received.

Beginning Monday, November 27, flu vaccine will be available to high risk individuals in Claiborne, Copiah, Simpson, Smith, Jasper, Clarke and all other counties southward.

"We urge people at high risk — the elderly, chronically ill, and health care workers who care for them — to get the vaccine as soon as it's available," said State Health Officer Dr. Ed Thompson. "We are still asking people not at high risk to wait. We expect to have enough vaccine for everyone who want it, but right now we need to use the available vaccine to protect those at highest risk."

Persons who are at highest risk for influenza complications include

- < anyone 65 years and older
- < residents and personnel of nursing homes and other chronic-care facilities that house people of any age who have chronic medical conditions
- < adults and children who have chronic disorders of the pulmonary cardiovascular systems, including asthma
- < adults and children who have required regular medical follow-up or hospitalization during the past year because of chronic metabolic disease (including diabetes mellitus), kidney dysfunction, blood disorders, or immunosuppression

- < children and teenagers – aged six months to 18 years – who are receiving long-term aspirin therapy and therefore might be at risk for developing Reye syndrome after influenza infection
- < women who will be in the second or third trimester of pregnancy during the influenza season
- < physicians, nurses, and other personnel in both hospital and outpatient-care settings, including emergency response workers
- < persons who provide home care to persons in high-risk groups
- < household members (including children) of persons in high-risk groups.

Although Mississippi's flu season does not usually begin until mid-December or early January, the Mississippi State Department of Health recommends the influenza vaccine now for those at high risk.

"The first public health priority of influenza vaccination is not only Mississippi but across the nation is to help high risk people obtain vaccine to prevent the flu and complications related to the flu," said Thompson. "We are asking for those who are not at risk and normally get their flu vaccine to please wait until we have more vaccine and understand the importance of vaccinating those who are at high risk first."

Like all states, Mississippi continues to deal with a nationwide delay of the influenza vaccine. In June, flu vaccine manufacturers told federal public health officials to expect delays in flu vaccine shipments. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) has guaranteed the production of up to nine million doses of additional flu vaccine to make up for possible shortfalls experienced by some of the vaccine manufacturers.

Health officials stressed that a shortage of vaccine is not expected, only a delay.

The following counties will have the flu vaccine available beginning Monday, November 27: Adams, Amite, Claiborne, Clarke, Copiah, Covington, Forrest, Franklin, George, Greene, Hancock, Harrison, Jackson, Jasper, Jefferson, Jefferson Davis, Jones, Lamar, Lawrence, Lincoln, Marion, Pearl River, Perry, Pike, Simpson, Smith, Stone, Walthall, Wayne, and Wilkinson.

Thompson added, "We expect to have enough vaccine for everyone, including low risk people who just do not want to get the flu. We just need the cooperation of those at low risk right now."

As new vaccine shipments arrive and are distributed to more county health department clinics, announcements will be published to let Mississippians know when vaccine will be available at their local county clinic. More information about influenza disease and the vaccine is on the CDC Web site, [www.cdc.gov](http://www.cdc.gov). Residents with questions may call their local county health department.

